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WRITTEN STATEMENT

**Weapons of Mass Destruction Hearing
October 11, 2001**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Veterans Affairs Committee, I am Jim Krueger, Executive Vice President of the American Red Cross. On behalf of the Red Cross, I am honored to be here today to share with you the Red Cross response to the horrific events of September 11th and our interaction with the Veterans Administration in times of national emergency.

This terrible tragedy has touched all of us in a permanent way. America's spirit, our liberty and national security have been attacked. Yet we have seen firsthand the resilience and dignity of our countrymen. As Dr. Bernadine Healy, president and CEO of the American Red Cross has said, "What has taken place is extraordinary, and we must respond in an extraordinary way. The American Red Cross has a tremendous responsibility – to live up to the inspiration and memory of those lost. It is with great humility and pride that we carry out this noble obligation to serve the American people at this time of great need."

The Red Cross is an essential partner with federal response agencies during disasters by Congressional charter and by statute. Our primary focus is on the human needs of those affected, and we respond to both the physical and emotional devastation experienced by people during and after a disaster. Our duty yesterday, today and tomorrow is to serve humanity with dignity, valor, and compassion.

Evolving to meet the public's needs and expectations, the American Red Cross has unique capabilities and expertise, derived through more than 100 years of experience with disasters and public health challenges. One hundred years ago, we could not have imagined the devastation wrought by the recent terrorist attacks. Unimaginable as it may seem, terrorism on U.S. soil has become an appalling fact of life. The last time that such devastation occurred in this country was during the Civil War, and out of the chaos of that war came the American Red Cross.

With a presence in almost every community, Red Cross employees and volunteers are among the first on the scene of a disaster, and work closely with local and state first responders. Immediately following a disaster, before a presidential declaration is made

triggering federal response and resources, the Red Cross is on site sheltering and feeding victims, their families, those fleeing the affected area, and first responders.

The Red Cross has systems and infrastructure in place, which support our nationwide capability to help prepare for and respond to disasters of every kind, quickly and routinely. We can mobilize a network of trained staff and volunteers in communities throughout the nation, experts in logistics, nursing, mental health, communication, and sheltering. Most importantly, the public trusts us. The American Red Cross is a trusted, independent organization that can serve as a vital link between all levels of government and the American public during an event of this magnitude.

MANDATED RESPONSIBILITIES OF AMERICAN RED CROSS

Congressional Charter

We derive our authority from our Congressional Charter of 1905. This covenant directs us to carry out humanitarian service to victims of war, and a “system of national and international relief ...and apply that system in mitigating the suffering caused by pestilence, famine, fire, floods, and other great national calamities, and to devise and carry out measures for preventing those calamities.” We are also entrusted to serve "...in accordance with military authorities as a medium of communication between the people of the United States and the armed forces..." With the recent deployment of troops, the Red Cross Armed Forces Services has over 200 American Red Cross staff deployed worldwide, assisting our men and women in uniform.

The charter defines the role of the American Red Cross as an auxiliary to the United States government in the fulfillment of the Geneva Conventions to protect victims of conflict. The terrorist attacks of September were acts of war, which trigger our work under the Conventions to inform the public about international humanitarian law. Our focus is on the moral and legal obligation to exercise humanitarian restraint within our own communities following this great trauma.

Federal Response Plan

The Red Cross has obligations under the Federal Response Plan, codified by the "Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act" (Public Law 93-288, as amended). We have lead responsibility for Emergency Support Function #6 (ESF #6), Mass Care. We meet the needs of disaster victims by providing food, shelter, clothing, and by operating a family linking system to report on the status of those affected and to reunite them with their families.

To assist us in carrying out this role, the Federal Response Plan designates eight federal agencies as “support agencies” including the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Veterans Affairs, and the General Services Administration, U.S. Postal Service and FEMA.

The Red Cross also supports the Department of Health and Human Services, the lead agency for "Health and Medical Services" (ESF #8), and FEMA as the lead agency for "Information and Planning" (ESF #5).

Aviation Disaster Act

The Red Cross also has obligations to provide valuable services in the event of aviation disasters. These obligations are codified by the “Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996” (Public Law 104-264). We have primary responsibility for coordinating the emotional care and support of the families of passengers involved in aviation disasters. This includes mental health and counseling services, meeting with families who have traveled to the location of the disaster, and to periodically contact families after such a disaster until assistance is no longer needed. We also have a solemn responsibility in that we are to arrange a suitable memorial service following such a tragedy.

AMERICAN RED CROSS RESPONSE TO SEPTEMBER 11TH ATTACKS

We have never faced a disaster of this size, scope or intensity. In New York City, at the Pentagon, and in Pennsylvania nearly 20,000 dedicated disaster relief volunteers have been working tirelessly providing humanitarian assistance. The American Red Cross has provided safe refuge for over 4,000 people in 76 shelters, served 1.6 million meals to survivors, emergency personnel and stranded travelers. And the American Red Cross has helped 30,000 people by providing crisis, grief and spiritual counseling.

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the American Red Cross has launched an unprecedented relief effort that calls upon virtually every line of service – Blood, Disaster, International, Chapter Services, and the Armed Forces Emergency Services. In each instance, we focus on the needs of the people we serve: the rescue workers, those lost, their families, those in hospitals and those mourning in communities everywhere. That has led us to embark on services under our mission never before taken.

Immediately following the attacks, the American Red Cross:

- Dispatched expert trained Aviation Incident Response (AIR) teams to the plane crash sites and Boston, Newark, Los Angeles and San Francisco to support rescue workers and anyone present by offering food, beverages and a comfortable place to rest as well as offering grieving and spiritual counseling.
- Ensured the adequacy of our inventory of blood, contacted hospitals and public health officials in New York City, Washington, DC and Pennsylvania to have ready lifesaving blood, and moved blood to the perimeter from other parts of the country so that it would be readily available wherever needed. We also mobilized albumin and tissue for burn victims.
- There has been an enormous outpouring of Americans wishing to give blood as a way to help, giving a piece of themselves. The Red Cross expanded blood collection, storage and freezing capacity so that we did not have to turn generous blood donors away and so that we could build and maintain a large, readily deployable liquid inventory of blood and grow our frozen supply. We have radically increased our national blood inventories from 2-3 days to 10 days or more through this effort, which has made us stronger than ever before in blood readiness.

- Within a week the American Red Cross initiated a financial gift program for families who lost someone as a result of this tragedy, to help with near term financial needs such as food, clothing, utilities, transportation, mortgage or rent payments, funeral and related expenses, and other time sensitive and uncovered expenses. This gift is being provided in the form of a tax-free grant.
- Our Armed Forces Services are expanding their work as our troops are being mobilized, an established American Red Cross role for over a century. As active duty military, Guardsmen and Reservists are separated from their families, the American Red Cross will provide around-the-clock worldwide emergency communication services, confidential counseling, access to financial assistance for military families in crisis, family support and other assistance.
- Our chapter network has been activated to support communities by providing needed services. All of America is grieving and we have embarked on nationwide grieving and healing outreach programs in our chapters. Our chapters are promoting the humanitarian principles of the Red Cross, including neutrality, unity, universality and encouraging tolerance. Our international services are working with families of foreign nationals who were lost in this tragedy by linking their families through their local national Red Cross and Red Crescent Society and assisting with travel and logistics.
- To help the many thousands of people in New York City struggling to recover from the devastation caused by the terrorist attacks, the American Red Cross has set up three warehouses stocked with needed supplies such as food, cleaning materials, batteries and more. Called “canteens,” these facilities will help many people obtain needed supplies and whatever goods they need to aid their recovery.

COLLABORATION WITH VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

As a support agency to the Red Cross for Emergency Support Function #6, Mass Care, the Veterans Administration has provided important support for counseling services. Following a disaster, no matter if at the local, state or federal level, Veterans Administration counselors and members of the VA Chaplain Service have helped provide grief counseling and spiritual care under the auspices of Red Cross Disaster Services. VA counselors are currently serving at the Family Assistance Center in New York City, a unique facility created to help families who lost loved ones in the World Trade Center buildings. It has become a safe haven for victims and their families as well as a place for people who lost their jobs and homes to seek assistance.

The need for emotional support in the wake of the largest disaster ever to strike the United States cannot be overstated. We are all grieving, from the families who lost loved ones to the hundreds of rescue and relief workers, to those who watched via television, this disaster has had an emotional impact on many. Mental health workers, grief counselors and spiritual care advisors such as those from the Veterans Administration are supporting grieving families at the Family Assistance Centers in New York City and the

Pentagon, and were with the families who came to grieve and remember loved ones at the crash site in Pennsylvania. They are available to listen to help rescue workers at Respite Centers, guide parents at Service Centers and shelters in helping their children through the trauma of losing their home, help workers face their fears of returning to high rise office buildings, and much more.

In addition to providing counselors and chaplains to support the work of the American Red Cross, the VA has agreed to make available facilities suitable for shelters and to provide medical supplies for use in these facilities. As we continue our planning for future WMD events, we will work with the Veterans Administration to identify how and when these facilities may be used, and other opportunities for collaboration.

AMERICAN RED CROSS RESPONSE TO HUMAN NEEDS FOLLOWING A WMD EVENT

Before September 11th, we knew that the American people would expect much from the Red Cross in the event of a terrorist attack. We knew it was a matter of when, not if. Our planning efforts had been underway for almost 2 years. The events of this past month have confirmed that we have an important role, and that as with all government and non-governmental entities responding to this disaster, additional planning, training and coordination is needed. This will be an ongoing effort. Our major planning and preparedness initiatives are described below. In many of these areas we will need partners, including the Veterans Administration.

Mobilize Expert Volunteers to Respond to People's Needs

Over the past century, the Red Cross has demonstrated its ability to mobilize expert volunteers during times of crisis. Red Cross must recruit and train volunteers with a wide range of expertise, such as employees of the Veterans Administration, to be ready to meet extraordinary demands.

- **Red Cross Medical Reserve Corps - "Mercy Battalion"**: We will establish a corps of medical reservists (general practitioners, pediatricians, internists, respiratory therapists, physician assistants, pharmacists, phlebotomists and nurses) to be deployed from across the country. As envisioned, this corps will supplement the work of those medical professionals, primarily Emergency Medicine physicians, supporting the Department of Health and Human Services' National Disaster Medical System (NDMS). The Corps will enable the Red Cross to expand the basic health care provided in our shelters.
- **Vaccination Capability**: Biological terrorism could easily overwhelm the nation's public health infrastructure. The Red Cross can work with public health officials to assist with vaccinations by offering the people, facilities and assistance for rapid and large-scale emergency vaccinations. During last year alone we assisted with immunizations for nearly 100,000 people.

- National Pharmaceutical Stockpile: As requested by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Red Cross is prepared to mobilize volunteers to break down and assist in dispensing the National Pharmaceutical Stockpile (NPS) strategically located throughout the country, so that these medications are ready when needed.
- Mental Health Issues: As the American Red Cross has seen in traumatic situations from Kosovo to the crash of Egypt Air 990, grief counseling and spiritual care are important elements of recovery. Even today, five years later, we are still counseling people in Oklahoma City. The Red Cross can mobilize more than 4,000 licensed, trained, practicing professionals in an emergency.

Provision of Food, Shelter and Basic Health Support

Our response and preparation regarding mass care depends upon the agent used - nuclear, chemical, radiological and high-yield explosive agents each carry unique response requirements. Biological weapons provide the greatest challenge in terms of shelter and containment since the attacks may not be successfully detected and identified until days after its release. Infection of thousands of civilians could require weeks to months of quarantines and martial law.

Large numbers of people will flee or be evacuated from areas impacted by an attack. Hospital facilities will be overwhelmed. The Red Cross will not only be asked to provide food, shelter and basic first aid to those displaced by the disaster, but to augment existing health care facilities which will devote resources to treat the most gravely injured. Hospital patients with less serious conditions and those in non-acute care settings will be moved to shelters to make room for the more seriously ill and injured. We will need trained medical professionals to observe for symptoms, administer medications and vaccines, and provide basic health care. Again, we will explore potential collaborations with the Veterans Administration to meet these needs.

CONCLUSION

The American Red Cross is an important private sector partner with Congress and the Executive Branch agencies in the development of a national strategy to prepare the nation to meet the human needs of those affected by WMD. We are an independent humanitarian organization with a history of trust and caring with the American public, as well as recognized leadership and effectiveness in responding to disasters domestically and internationally. We have demonstrated success in working well in public-private alliances and in coordinating activities with other organizations at the local, state and federal levels. Our more than 100 years of experience in helping people recover from disasters and coordinating relief will contribute to your leadership efforts to address this major national security issue.

Congress can rely on the American Red Cross to take a leadership role in addressing the human needs following catastrophic events. To coordinate and carry out this role, we need support from agencies such as the Veterans Administration. Thank you for inviting us to be part of this important hearing.